

NCA
VOC FOR IOP/FN
BACKGROUNDER NO. 5-5492
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ETHIOPIA: A YEAR OF TERROR

ANNCR:

IN ETHIOPIA, WHAT HAS BEEN DESCRIBED AS A REIGN OF TERROR, AND WHAT THE GOVERNMENT ITSELF CALLS THE RED TERROR CAMPAIGN, HAS BEEN UNDERWAY NOW FOR NEARLY ONE YEAR. VOA'S BOB CHANCELLOR SENDS THIS BACKGROUND REPORT:

VOICE:

FRIDAY FEBRUARY 3 MARKS THE FIRST ANNIVERSARY OF A SHOOTOUT AT THE GRAND PALACE IN ADDIS ABABA AMONG MEMBERS OF THE RULING MILITARY COUNCIL OR THE DERGUE, IN WHICH HEAD OF STATE GENERAL TESERI BENTE AND SIX OTHER OFFICERS WERE KILLED. AT THE TIME COLONEL MENGISTU HAILE-MARIAM BECAME THE LEADER OF THE DERGUE AND OF ETHIOPIA, THE FOURTH MAN TO HEAD THE DERGUE SINCE THE OVERTHROW OF EMPEROR HAILE SELASSIE IN 1974. TWO MONTHS LATER, SIX PEOPLE DESCRIBED AS COUNTER REVOLUTIONARIES WERE KILLED BY FIRING SQUAD IN THE FIRST PUBLIC EXECUTION SINCE THE MILITARY SEIZED POWER. THE KILLING IN THE ETHIOPIAN CAPITAL HAS CONTINUED UNABATED SINCE.

JUST THIS WEEK COLONEL MENGISTU TOLD A MASS RALLY IN ADDIS ABABA THAT THE RED TERROR AGAINST ANARCHISTS AND OTHER SUBVERSIVE GROUPS SHOULD BE INTENSIFIED. THE UNDERGROUND OPPOSITION GROUP, THE ETHIOPIAN PEOPLES REVOLUTIONARY PARTY, HAS ACCUSED ETHIOPIA'S CUBAN AND SOVIET ALLIES OF HELPING THE GOVERNMENT IN A TERROR CAMPAIGN AIMED AT LIQUIDATING DISSIDENTS. THE E.P.R.P. CHARGED IN A STATEMENT ISSUED IN KHARTOUM THAT THIRTY-FIVE-HUNDRED PEOPLE HAVE BEEN LIQUIDATED BY THE ETHIOPIAN GOVERNMENT IN THE PAST FOUR MONTHS. ANOTHER SOURCE IN ADDIS ABABA PUT THE NUMBER KILLED AT SEVEN

HUNDRED IN THE PAST SIX WEEKS. IN MAY, ONE THOUSAND PEOPLE, MOSTLY STUDENTS, REPORTEDLY WERE KILLED FOR DEMONSTRATING AGAINST THE REGIME.

THE MOST RECENT WAVE OF KILLINGS BEGAN IN DECEMBER, ABOUT THE TIME TWO AMERICAN CONGRESSMEN WERE IN ADDIS ABABA AND WITNESSED NINE BODIES ON PUBLIC DISPLAY AFTER A NIGHT PUNCTUATED BY GUNFIRE. RECENT TRAVELERS FROM THERE HAVE TOLD VOA THAT GUNFIRE IS HEARD EVERY NIGHT AND THAT AN AVERAGE OF THIRTY-FIVE BODIES ARE DELIVERED TO ONE CITY HOSPITAL ALONE EVERY NIGHT. THE KILLINGS REPORTEDLY ARE THE WORK OF KEBELE OR DISTRICT REVOLUTIONARY DEFENSE SQUADS WHO, THE CONGRESSMEN SAID, HAVE A LICENSE TO KILL ANYONE SUSPECTED OF BEING COUNTER-REVOLUTIONARIES.

ONE RECENT TRAVELER, A LONG TIME ADDIS RESIDENT, SAID YOUNG PEOPLE ARE GATHERED TOGETHER IN EVERY DISTRICT AND URGED TO CONFESS THEIR MEMBERSHIP IN AND SUPPORT FOR THE E.P.R.P. WHEN THEY DO, THEY ARE IMPRISONED OR SENT TO RETRAINING CENTERS. MANY OF THE DEAD FOUND ON PUBLIC DISPLAY EACH DAY ARE BELIEVED TO BE FORMER INMATES OF THOSE DISTRICT PRISONS. THEIR HEADS HAVE BEEN SHAVED AND SIGNS ATTACHED TO THE BODIES READING, "MAY THE RED TERROR INCREASE. DEATH TO THE E.P.R.P." AS AN EXPECTED RESULT, THERE IS SAID TO BE A STRONG FEELING OF FEAR AND TENSION IN THE STREETS, ALTHOUGH THE CITY'S POOR CITIZENS ARE WILLING TO DISCUSS THE KILLINGS -- SINCE THEY CAN BE CONSIDERED LIKELY TARGETS REGARDLESS OF WHAT THEY DO.

THE E.P.R.P. LEADERSHIP IS SAID TO HAVE GONE UNDERGROUND. IRONICALLY, PERHAPS, THE E.P.R.P. IS EQUAL AS MARXIST-LENINIST AS THE DERGUE, BUT IT OPPOSES MILITARY RULE.

THE CAMPAIGN CERTAINLY IS NOT BEING KEPT A SECRET BY THE MILITARY GOVERNMENT. ADDIS ABABA RADIO REPORTS NEARLY DAILY

ON A NUMBER OF SWEEPS AND ARRESTS IN VARIOUS DISTRICTS. JUST LAST SUNDAY (JANUARY 29) IT REPORTED A TOTAL OF ONE-THOUSAND-EIGHTEEN (1,018) COUNTER REVOLUTIONARIES HAD REPENTED AND GONE TO POLITICAL GUIDANCE CAMPS IN ONE DAY AS THE RESULT OF MEETINGS IN FOUR DISTRICTS. AND THE PREVIOUS WEEK, THE RADIO ANNOUNCED THAT REVOLUTIONARY MEASURES -- A EUPHEMISM FOR EXECUTION -- HAD BEEN TAKEN AGAINST THIRTEEN COUNTER REVOLUTIONARIES IN A DISTRICT ON THE OUTSKIRTS OF THE ETHIOPIAN CAPITAL.

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